

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TGEN ETRN EEWT ELTN UR US
SUBJECT: US-USSR TRANSPORTATION AGREEMENT: U.S. RAILWAY DELEGATION
VISIT (05.03)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. SUMMARY: U.S. RAIL DELEGATION ENJOYED
A SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO USSR, AUGUST 3-15. SOVIETS CONTINUED
EFFORT TO MAKE RAIL COOPERATION MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL. ADDITIONAL
EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND HARDWARE AGREED ON AND THERE
LOOKS TO BE POTENTIAL FOR EXPANDED COOPERATION. END SUMMARY.

2. U.S. RAIL DELEGATION COMPLETED A SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO THE
USSR AUGUST 15. USDEL VISITED SOVIET ROLLING STOCK REPAIR AND
MAINTENANCE FACILITIES IN KIEV, RIGA, LENINGRAD, AND MOSCOW
DURING ITS STAY (AUGUST 3-15). FSO FROM CONGEN LENINGRAD
ACCOMPANIED USDEL DURING RIGA AND LENINGRAD PORTIONS OF VISIT
(BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL). USDEL LEASER, ROBERT PARSONS OF
DOT, ADVISED EMBASSY THAT THE VISIT HAD BEEN VERY USEFUL AND
HE CHARACTERIZED SOVIET HOSTS AS BOTH HOSPITABLE AND VERY
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FORTHCOMING ON PRACTICAL MATTERS. USDEL VISIT, PARSONS
OBSERVED, CONTINUED HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL AND BENEFICIAL COOPERATION
WITH THE SOVIET UNION IN RAIL TRANSPORTATION AREA.

3. AS A RESULT OF THIS VISIT, SOVIETS AGCEED TO PROVIDE
SAMPLES OF HIGH-SPEEC RAIL FLAW DETECTING DEVICES. SOVIETS
ALSO SHOWED EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED IN THE AUTOMATED

LAYING OF LARGE SEGMENTS OF PREASSEMBLED TRACK ON HIGH DENSITY ROUTES. THIS TECHNOLOGY PROMISES TO BE USEFUL IN FURTHER MODERNIZATION OF U.S. RAIL SYSTEMS.

4. USDEL REPORTED SOVIET ENTHUSIASM FOR RAIL COOPERATION REMAINS UNDIMINISHED. SOVIETS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN U.S. HARDWARE INCLUDING COMPUTER SYSTEMS FOR RAIL MANAGEMENT PURPOSES AND YARD CLASSIFICATION EQUIPMENT (IN BOTH CATEGORIES THERE MAY BE COMMERCIAL SALES OPPORTUNITIES), DIESEL-ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES, AND U.S. ROLLING STOCK. THE SOVIETS SHOWED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN JOINT TESTING OF ROLLING STOCK AXLES, BOX ASSEMBLIES AND ROLLER BEARINGS, ITEMS FOR WHICH THERE MAY ALSO BE SALES POTENTIAL.

5. COOPERATION WITH THE USSR IS PAYING DIVIDENDS TO THE U.S. ACCORDING TO USDEL. THE EXCHANGE OF RAILWAY HARDWARE SAMPLES HAS BENEFITTED BOTH SIDES AND HAS LED DIRECTLY TO THE USE OF CONCRETE TIES, DEVELOPED FROM SOVIET MODELS, IN THE MODERNIZATION OF THE U.S. NORTHEAST CORRIDOR RAIL LINES. USDEL NOTED THAT U.S. RAILWAYS HAVE BENEFITTED ALSO FROM ACCESS TO SUPERIOR SOVIET TECHNIQUES, NOTABLY IN HARDWARE RESEARCH AND TESTING. THE U.S. RAIL TEST RING (FAST) AT PUEBLO, DEVELOPED FROM A SOVIET MODEL, HAS PROVED OF GREAT VALUE AND ANOTHER WILL PROBABLY BE BUILT. IN USDEL'S VIEW, U.S. RAILROADS MAY ALSO PROFIT FROM STUDY OF SOVIET OPERATIONS WHICH PRESENTLY MOVE 62 PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S RAIL FREIGHT (THREE TIMES MORE THAN IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MOVED BY U.S. RAILROADS) OVER ONLY 40 PERCENT OF U.S. TRACK MILEAGE. THE SOVIETS APPARENTLY HANDLE HIGH DENSITY TRAFFIC WELL, REPORTEDLY TURNING THEIR ROLLING STOCK AROUND IN AN AVERAGE OF 5 1/2 DAYS (BY COMPARISON, U.S. AVERAGE TURNAROUND TIME IS 30 DAYS).
END UNCLASSIFIED.

6. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE: COMMENT: RAIL COOPERATION BENEFITS BOTH SIDES AND HAS BECOME ONE OF THE SOLID SUCCESSES UNDER THE PRESENT BILATERALS. COOPERATION HAS MOVED QUICKLY FROM THE MERE EXCHANGE OF DELEGATIONS TO THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION AND HARDWARE AS WELL AS INTO JOINT TESTING, ALL OF WHICH HAVE PROVIDED TANGIBLE AND MUTUAL BENEFITS. SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO BOTH TECHNOLOGY AND OPERATIONS HAS ENABLED THE U.S. PARTICIPANTS TO ACQUIRE A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF SOVIET RAIL OPERATIONS WITHOUT WHICH COOPERATION WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. DESPITE SOME GLARING WEAKNESSES OF THE SOVIET RAILROADS, THERE ARE GOOD REASONS- COMMERCIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND OPERATIONAL - TO CONTINUE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL COOPERATION IN THIS AREA. INDEED, POTENTIAL APPEARS TO EXIST FOR AN EXPANSION OF COOPERATION THAT COULD ASSIST BOTH SYSTEMS TO COPE WITH THE DEMANDS IMPOSED BY MODERNIZATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

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